

THE FLOARE AND THE LEAFE, &  
THE BOKE OF CAPIDE, GOD OF  
LOVE, OR THE CUCKOO AND THE  
NIGHTINGALE





To Mr & Mrs T. M. Rooke,  
from S.C.C.  
Christmas 1896.

Handwritten text, possibly a title or header, located at the top left of the page. The text is faint and appears to be written in a cursive or script style.



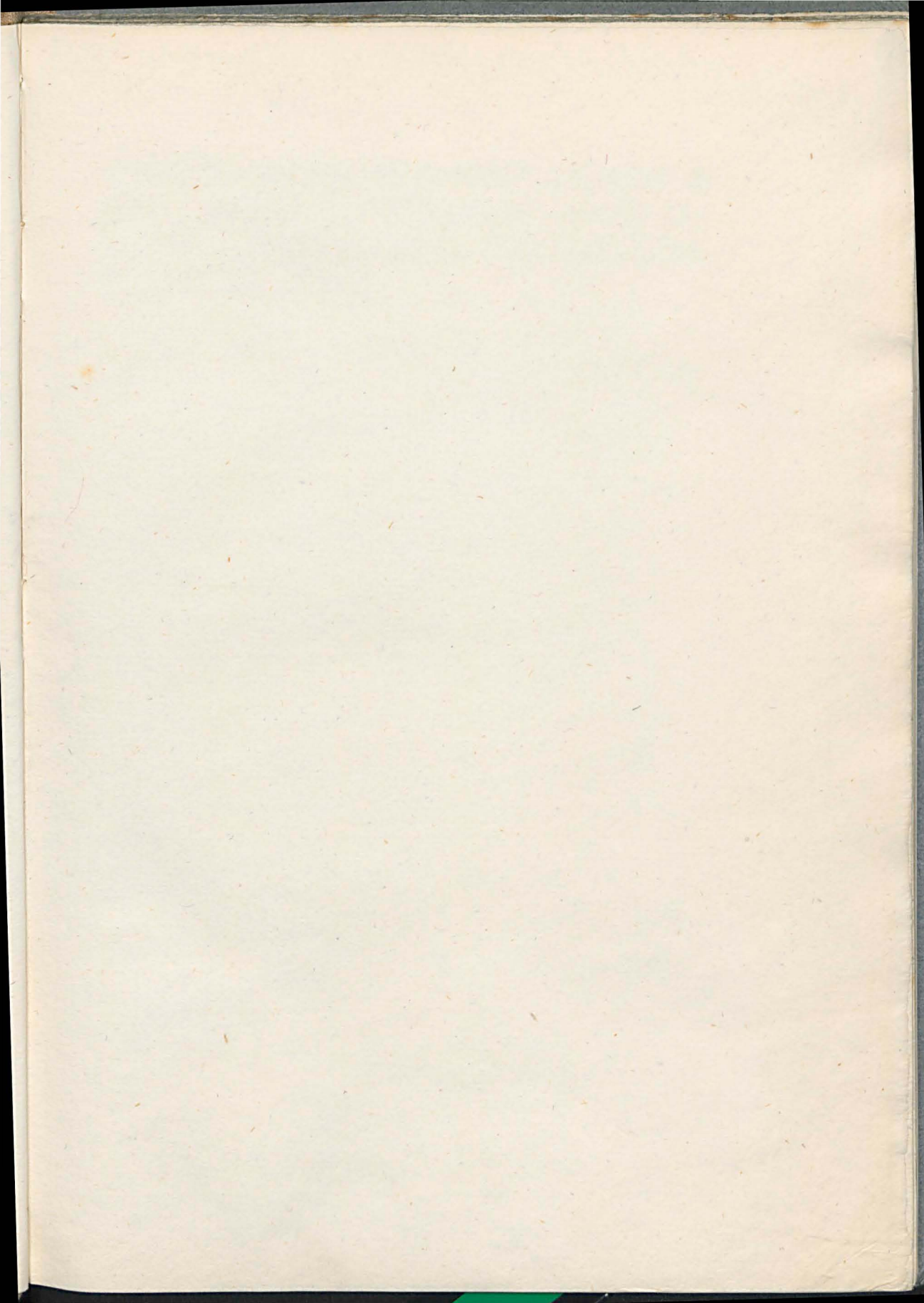
















THE LITTLE AND THE LARGE, &  
THE LITTLE AND THE LARGE, &  
THE LITTLE AND THE LARGE, &  
THE LITTLE AND THE LARGE, &  
THE LITTLE AND THE LARGE, &



THE FLOURE AND THE LEAFE, &  
THE BOKE OF CAPIDE, GOD OF  
LOVE, OR THE CUCKOW AND THE  
NIGHTINGALE



Rare

PR

1898

.F4

1896

THE FLORE AND THE LEAF, &  
THE BOKE OF CAPIDE, GOD OF  
LOVE, OR THE CACKOW AND THE  
NIGHTINGALE

The floure and the Leafe ❀❀



THAT Phebus his chaire of gold so hie  
Hadde whirled up the sterrie sky alofte,  
And in the Boole was entred certainly:  
Whan showres swete of raine discended softe,  
Causing the ground, so fele times and ofte,  
Up for to given many an holsome aire,  
And every plaine was eke yclothed faire



With newe grene, and maketh smallle floures  
To springen here and there in field and mede;  
So very good and holsome be the shoures,  
That it renueth that was old and dede  
In winter time; and out of every sede  
Springeth the herbe, so that every wight  
Of this sesoun wexeth ful glad and light.

And I, so glad of the sesoun thus swete,  
Was happed thus upon a certaine night:  
As I lay in my bed, slepe ful unmete  
Was unto me; but why that I ne might  
Rest, I ne wiste; for there nas erthly wight,  
As I suppose, hadde more hertes ese  
Than I, for I nadde sicknesse nor disese.

Wherefore I mervaile gretly of my selfe,  
That I withouten slepe so longe lay;  
And up I rose three houres after twelfe,  
Aboute the firste springing of the day;  
And on I putte my geare and mine array,  
And to a plesaunt grove I gan to passe,  
Long or the brighte sonne uprisen was;



In which were okes grete, streight as a line,  
Under the which the grasse, so fresh of hewe,  
Was newly sprong; and an eight foot or nine  
Every tree wel fro his fellow grew,  
With branches brode, lade with leves newe,  
That sprongen out ayen the sonne shene,  
Some very rede, and some a glad light grene;

Which, as me thoghte, was right a plesant sight;  
And eke the briddes songes for to here  
Would have rejoyced any erthly wight;  
And I that couthe not yet, in no manere,  
Heren the nightingale of al the yere,  
ful busily herkened with herte and ere,  
If I her voice perceiue coude any where.

And, at the last, a path of litel brede  
I found, that gretly hadde not used be;  
for it forgrowen was with grasse and wede,  
That wel unneth a wight ne might it se:  
Thoghte I, This path some whider goth, parde!  
And so I followede, til it me broght  
To right a plesaunt herber, well ywroght,



That benched was, and eke with turfes newe  
freshly turved, whereof the grene gras,  
So smal, so thikke, so short, so fresh of hewe,  
That most ylike grene wol, I wot, it was:  
The hegge also that yede in this compas,  
And closede in alle the grene herbere,  
With sicamour was set and eglatere,

Wrethen in fere so wel and conningly,  
That every braunch and lefe grew by mesure,  
Plaine as a bord, of oon height by and by.  
I ne segh never thing, I you ensure,  
So wel ydone; for he that toke the cure  
It for to make, I trow did al his peine  
To make it passe alle tho that men have seine.

And shapen was this herber, roofe and al,  
As is a prety parlour; and also  
The hegge as thikke as is a castle wal,  
That who that list withoute to stond or go,  
Though he would al day prien to and fro,  
He shoulde not see if there were any wight  
Within or no; but one within wel might



Perceiue alle tho that yeden there withoute  
Into the field, that was on every side  
Covered with corne and grasse; that out of doubte,  
Thogh one wolde seken al the worlde wide,  
So rich a felde ne coude not be espide  
On any coast, as of the quantitie;  
for of alle goode thing there was plentie.

And I that al this plesaunt sight ay sie  
Thoghte sodainly I felte so swete an aire  
Com of the eglentere, that certainly  
There is no herte, I deme, in such dispaire,  
Ne with no thoughtes froward and contraire  
So overlaid, but it sholde sone have bote,  
If it had ones felt this savour sote.

And as I stode and cast aside mine eie,  
I was of ware the fairest medler tree,  
That ever yet in al my life I sie,  
As ful of blosmes as it mighte be;  
Therein a goldfinch leping pretilye  
fro bough to bough; and, as him list, gan ete  
Of buddes here and there and floures swete.



And to the herber side ther was joyninge  
This faire tree, of which I have you told;  
And at the last the brid began to singe,  
Whan he had eten what he ete wold,  
So passing swetly, that by manifold  
It was more plesaunt than I coude devise.  
And whan his song was ended in this wise,

The nightingale with so mery a note  
Answered him, that al the wode rong  
So sodainly, that, as it were a sote,  
I stood astonied; so was I with the song  
Thorow ravished, that til late and long,  
Ne wist I in what place I was, ne where;  
And ay, me thoghte, she song even by mine ere.

Wherefore about I waited busily,  
On every side, if that I her mighte see;  
And, at the last, I gan ful wel aspie  
Where she sat in a fresh grene laurer tree,  
On the further side, even right by me,  
That gave so passing a delicious smel,  
According to the eglentere ful wel.



Whereof I hadde so inly great plaisir,  
That, as me thoghte, I surely ravished was  
Into Paradise, where as my desire  
Was for to be, and no ferther to pass,  
As for that day; and on the sote grass,  
I sat me downe; for, as for mine entent,  
The briddes song was more convenient,

And more plesaunt to me by many fold,  
Than mete or drinke, or any other thing.  
Thereto the herber was so fresh and cold,  
The wholsome savours eke so comforting,  
That as I demede, sith the beginning  
Of thilke world was never sene or than  
So plesaunt a ground of none erthely man.

And as I sat, the briddes herkening thus,  
Me thoghte that I herde voices sodainly,  
The most swetest and most delicious  
That ever any wight, I trow truly,  
Herde in his life; for soth the armony  
And swete accord was in so good musike,  
That the voices to angels most was like.

And at the last, out of a grove faste by,  
That was right goodly and plesaunt to sight,  
I sie where there cam, singing lustily,  
A world of ladies; but, to tel aright  
Here grete beautie, it lieth not in my might,  
Ne here array; neverthesse I shal  
Telle you a part, though I speke not of al.

The surcotes white, of velvet wele sitting,  
They were in clad, and the semes echone,  
As it were in a maner garnishing,  
Was set with emeraudes, one and one.  
But by and by ful many a riche stone  
Was set on the purfiles, out of doute,  
Of colors, sleeves, and traines round aboute.

As grete perles, round and oriente,  
Diamondes fine, and rubies rede  
And many another stone, of which I wente  
The names now; and everich on hir hede  
A riche fret of gold, which, withoute drede,  
Was ful of stately riche stones set;  
And every lady had a chapelet



Upon hir hede of floures fresh and grene,  
So wele ywroght and so mervellously,  
That sothe it was a noble sight to sene;  
Some of laurer, and some ful plesauntly  
Hadde chapelets of woodbind, and sadly  
Some of agnus castus were also  
Chapelets freshe; but there were many tho

That song and daunced, eke ful soberly,  
And al they yede in maner of compace;  
But oon there yede in mid the company,  
Soole by hir selfe; but alle followede the grace  
Which that she kepte, whose heavenly faire face  
So plesaunt was, and hir wele shap persone,  
That of beautie she past hem everichone.

And more richly besene, by manifold,  
She was also in every maner thing:  
Upon hir hede, ful plesaunt to beholde,  
A crowne of gold, riche for any king:  
A braunch of agnus castus eke bering  
In hir hand; and to my sight truly,  
She lady was of al the company.



And she began a roundel lustely,  
That Suse le foyle, devers moy, men calle,  
Seant, mon joly cuer est endormy;  
And than the company answered alle,  
With voices swete entuned, and so smalle  
That it me thoghte the swetest melody  
That ever I herde in al my life soothly.

And thus they came, dauncing and singing  
Into the middest of the mede echone,  
Before the herber where I was sitting;  
And, God wot, me thoghte I was wel bigone;  
for than I might avise hem one by one,  
Who fairest was, who coude best daunce or singe,  
Or who most womanly was in alle thinge.

They hadde not daunced but a litel throwe,  
Whan that I herde not ferre off sodainely,  
So grete a noise of thondering trompes blowe,  
As though it should have departed the skie;  
And, aftir that, within a while I sie,  
from the same grove where the ladyes come oute,  
Of men of armes coming such a route,



As alle the men on earth hadde ben assembled  
In that place, wel horsed for the nones,  
Stering so faste, that al the erthe trembled:  
But for to speke of riches and of stones,  
And men and horse, I trowe the large wones  
Of Prestir John, ne al his tresorie,  
Mighte not unneth have boght the tenth partie

Of here array: whoso list heren more,  
I shal reherse so as I can a lite.  
Out of the grove, that I of spake before  
I sie com first, al in here clokes white,  
A company, that ware, for here delite,  
Chapelets fresh of okes serialle,  
Newly yspronge, and trompets they were alle.

On every trompe hanging a brode banere  
Of fine tartarium ful richely bete;  
Every trompet his lordes armes bere;  
About here neckes, with grete perles sete,  
Coleres brode; for cost they wolde not lete,  
As it wolde seme, for here scochones echone  
Were set aboute with many a precious stone.

Here horse harneis was al white also.  
And after hem next, in one company,  
Camen kinges of armes, and no mo,  
In clokes of white cloth of gold richly;  
Chapelets of grene upon here hedes on hie;  
The crownes that they on here scochones bere,  
Were set with perle, ruby, and saphere,

And eke grete diamondes, many one:  
But al here horse harneis and othere gere  
Was in a sute accordinge everichone,  
As ye have herde the foresaid trompets were;  
And, by seming, they were no thing to lere,  
And here guiding they dide so manerly.  
And, after hem, came a grete company

Of heraudes and pursevauntes eke,  
Arrayed in clothes of whit velvette,  
And, hardily, they were no thing to seke,  
Now they on hem sholden the harneis sette;  
And everiche man had on a chapelette;  
Scohones and eke horse harneis, indede,  
They had in sute of hem that fore hem yede.



Next after hem camen, in armour bright  
Al save here hedes, semely knightes nine;  
And every claspe and naile, as to my sight,  
Of here harneis were of rede golde fine;  
With cloth of gold, and furred with ermine  
Were the trappores of here stedes stronge,  
Wide and large, that to the ground dide honge.

And everiche bosse of bridel and paitrel  
That hadde they, was worth, as I wolde wene,  
A thousand pound; and on here hedes, wel  
Dressed, were crounes of fresh laurer grene,  
The best ymade that ever I hadde sene;  
And everiche knight had after him riding  
Three henshemen on him ay awaiting.

Of which every first, on a short tronchoun,  
His lordes helme bare, so richly dight,  
That even the worst was worthy the ransoun  
Of any king; the second a shield bright  
Bare at his backe; the thridde bare upright  
A mightie spere, ful sharpe yground and kene,  
And every child eke ware of leves grene



A fresh chapelet upon his heres brighte;  
And clokes white of fine velvet they were;  
Here stedes trapped and arraied righte,  
Without difference, as here lordes were;  
And after hem, on many a fresh corsere,  
There came of armede knightes swich a route,  
That they bespradde the large field aboute.

And alle they ware, after here degrees,  
Chapelets newe made of laurer grene;  
Some of the oke, and some of other trees,  
Some in here hondes bare boughes shene,  
Some of laurer, and some of okes kene,  
Some of hauthorne, and some of the woodbind,  
And many mo which I hadde not in mind.

And so they came, here horses freshly stering  
With blodie sownes of her trompes loude;  
There sie I many an uncouth disguising  
In the array of thise knightes proude;  
And at the last, as evenly as they coude,  
They toke here place in middes of the mede,  
And every knight turned his horse hede



To his fellow, and lightly laid a spere  
In the arest; and so justes bigan  
On everiche part abouten, here and there;  
Some brake his spere, some drew down hors & manne;  
Aboute the field astray the stedes ranne;  
And, to behold here rule and governaunce,  
I you ensure, it was a grete plesaunce.

And so the justes last an houre and more;  
But tho that crouned were in laurer grene  
Wanne the prise; here dintes were so sore,  
That there was none ayenst hem mighte sustene:  
And the justing al was yleft off clene,  
And fro here horse the ninth alight anone,  
And so did al the remenaunt everichone.

And forth they yede togider, twain and twain,  
That to behold it was a worthy sight,  
Toward the ladyes on the grene plaine,  
That song and daunced, as I saide now righte:  
Th eladyes tho, sone as they goodly mighte,  
They braken off bothe the song and daunce,  
And yede to mete hem with ful glad semblaunce.



And everiche lady toke, ful womanly  
By the right hond a knight, and forth they yede  
Unto a faire laurer that stode fast by,  
With leves lade, the boughes of grete brede;  
And to my dome there never was, indede,  
Man that hadde sene halfe so faire a tree;  
for undirnethe there might it wel have be

An hundred persons, at here owne plesaunce,  
Shadowed fro the hete of Phebus bright,  
So that they sholden have felt no grevaunce  
Of raine ne haile that hem ne hurte might.  
The savour eke rejoice wold any wight,  
That hadde be sicke or melancolius,  
It was so very good and vertuous.

And with grete reverence encline they lowe  
To thilke tree so sote, and faire of hewe;  
And aftir that, within a litel throwe,  
They al beganne to singe and daunce of newe  
Some song of love, some plaining of untrewes,  
Envirouninge the tree that stood upright;  
And ever yede a lady and a knight.



And at the last mine eye I caste aside,  
And was ware of a lustie company  
That came roming out of the felde wide  
Hond in hond a knight and a lady;  
The ladies al in surcotes that richely  
Purfiled were with many a riche stone,  
And everiche knight of grene ware mantles on,

Enbrouded wel so as the surcotes were:  
And everich had a chapelet on hir hede,  
Which dide right wel upon the shíning here,  
Ymade of goodly floures white and rede;  
The knightes eke, that they in hond gan lede,  
In sute of hem ware chapelets everichone,  
And bífóre hem wente minstrels many one,

As harpes, pipes, lutes, and sautry,  
Al in grene; and on here hedes bare,  
Of divers floures, made ful craftely,  
Al in a sute, goodly chapelets they ware;  
And so dauncíng, into the mede they fare.  
In mid the which they fonde a tuft that was  
Al oversprad with floures in compas.



Whereto they al enclined everychone  
With gret reverence, and that ful humblely;  
And, at the laste, there bigan anone  
A lady for to singe right womanly  
A bargaret in praising the daisie;  
for, as me thoght, among hir notes swete,  
She said: *Si douse est la Margarete.*

And than they al answered hir in fere  
So passingly wel and so plesauntly,  
That soth it was a blisful noise to here;  
But I not how, it happede sodainly  
As aboute none, the sonne so fervently  
Wexe hote, that the pretie tendre floures  
Hadde lost the beautie of here freshe coloures,

forshronke with hete; the ladyes eke to/brent,  
That they ne wiste where hem to bestowe;  
The knightes swelte, for lakke of shade nie shent;  
And aftir that, within a litel throwe,  
The wind bigan so sturdily to blowe,  
That down goth alle the floures everichone,  
So that, in al the mede, there laft not one;



Save such as socoured were among the leves  
fro everich storm that mighten hem assaile,  
Growing undir hegges and thikke greves;  
And aftir that there came a storme of haile  
And raïne in fere, so that, withouten faile,  
The ladies ne the knightes nadde o threde  
Drie upon hem, so dropping was here wede.

And whan the storm was clene passed away,  
Tho clad in white that stode undir the tree,  
They felte no thing of the grete affray,  
That they in grene without had in ybe;  
To hem they yede for routhe and pite,  
Hem to comfort aftir here grete disese,  
So faine they were the helplesse for to ese.

Than was I ware how oon of hem in grene  
Had on a croune, ful rich and wel sitting;  
Wherefore I demed wel she was a quene,  
And tho in grene on hir were awaiting;  
The ladies than in white that were comming  
Towardes hem, and the knightes in fere,  
Biganne hem to comfort, and make hem chere.



The quene in white, that was of grete beautie,  
Toke by the hond the quene that was in grene,  
And said: Suster, I have right grete pitie  
Of your annoy, and of the troublous tene,  
Wherein ye and your companie have bene  
So long, alas! and if that it yow plesse  
To go with me, I shal do yow the ese

In al the plesure that I can or may;  
Whereof the tother, humbly as she mighte,  
Thonked hir moche; for in right il array  
She was with storm and hete, I yow behighte;  
And everiche lady, than anone ful righte,  
That were in white, oon of hem toke in grene  
By the hond; which whan the knightes hadde sene,

In lyk wise ech of hem toke hir a knight  
Yclad in grene, and forth with hem they fare  
Unto an hegge, where they anon gan right  
To make here justes: wolde they not spare  
Boughes to hewe doun, and eke trees square,  
Wherewith they made hem stately fires grete,  
To drie here clothes that were wringing wete.



And aftir that, of herbes that ther grewe,  
They made, for blisters of the sonne brenning,  
Very good and holsome ointments newe,  
Where that they yede the syke fast anointing;  
And aftir that they yede aboute gadering  
Plesaunt salades, which they made hem ete,  
for to refresh here grete unkindly hete.

The lady of the Lefe than gan to praye  
Hir of the floure, for so to my seminge  
They sholde be, as sene by here arraye,  
To soupe with hir, and eke for any thinge,  
That she sholde with hir al hir people bringe;  
And she ayen, in right goodly manere,  
Thanketh hir of hir most frendly chere,

Saying, plainely, that she wolde obaye  
With al hir herte al hir commaundement;  
And then anon, withoute lenger delaye,  
The lady of the Lefe hath oon ysent  
for a palfray, as aftir hir intent,  
Arrayed wel and faire in harneis golde,  
for no thing lacked, that to him long sholde.

And aftir that, to al hir company  
She made to purvey horse and everich thing  
That they neded; and than ful lustily,  
Even by the herber wher I was sitting,  
They passed al, so plesauntly singing,  
That it wold have comforted any wight.  
But than I sie a passing wonder sight;

for than the nightingale, that al the day  
Had in the laurer sete, and dide hir might  
The whole service to singe longing to May,  
Al sodainly bigan to take hir flight;  
And to the lady of the Lefe, forthright,  
She flew, and set hir on hir hond softly,  
Which was a thing I merveiled of gretely.

The goldfinch eke, that fro the medler tree  
Was fled for hete into the bushes colde,  
Unto the lady of the floure gan flee,  
And on hir hond he set him as he wolde,  
And plesauntly his winges gan to folde;  
And for to singe they pained hem both, as sore  
As they hadde do of al the day bifore.



And so thise ladies rode forth a grete pace,  
And al the rout of knyghtes eke in fere;  
And I that hadde sene al this wonder case,  
Thoght I wolde assay in some manere,  
To knowe fully the trouth of this matere;  
And what they were that rode so plesauntly.  
And whan they were the herber passed by,

I dreste me forth, and happede to mete anone  
Right a faire lady, I you ensure;  
And she come riding by hirself alone,  
Al in white; with semblaunce ful demure  
I salued hir, and bad hir good aventure  
Might hir bifal, as I coude most humbly;  
And she answerede: My doughter, gramercy!

☞ Madame, quod I, if that I dorst enquire  
Of yow, I wolde faine, of that company,  
Wite what they be that paste by this arbere?  
☞ And she ayen answerede right frendely:  
My faire doughter, al tho that passed here by  
In whyt clothing, be servaunts everichone  
Unto the Lefe, and I myselfe am one.



See ye not her that crownded is, quod she,  
Al in whyt? Madame, quod I, yis:  
That is Diane, goddessse of Chastite;  
And for bicause that she a maiden is,  
In hir own hond the braunch she beareth ywis,  
That agnus castus men calle properly;  
And alle the ladyes in hir company,

Which as ye se of that herbe chapelets were,  
Be such as han kept alway hir maidenhede:  
And alle they that of laurer chaplets bere,  
Be such as hardy were, and manly indede,  
Victorious name which never may be dede!  
And alle they were so worthy of here honde,  
That in here time none might hem withstonde.

And tho that were chaplets on here hede  
Of fresh woodbind, be such as never were  
To love untrew in word, in thoght, ne dede,  
But aye stedfast; ne for plesaunce, ne fere,  
Thogh that they shuld here hertes al totere,  
Wolde ne flitte, but ever were stedfaste,  
Til that here lives there asunder braste.



Now faire madame, quod I, yet wold I pray  
Your ladiship, if that it mighte be,  
That I mighte knowe, by some maner way,  
Sith that it hath yliked your beaute,  
The trouth of thise ladyes for to telle me;  
What that thise knightes be in rich armour,  
And what tho be in grene and were the flour?

And why that some dide reverence to the tre,  
And some unto the plot of floures faire?  
With right good will, my fair doghter, quod she,  
Sith your desire is good and debonaire;  
Tho nine crowned be very exemplaire  
Of al honour longing to chivalry;  
And those certaine be called the Nine Worthy,

Which ye may see now riding al bifore,  
That in here time dide many a noble dede,  
And for here worthinesse ful oft have bore  
The croune of laurer leves on here hede,  
As ye may in your olde bokes rede;  
And how that he that was a conquerour,  
Hadde by laurer alway his most honour.

And tho that bere bowes in here honde  
Of the precious laurer so notable,  
Be such as were, I wol ye undirstonde,  
Noble knightes of the rounde table,  
And eke the Douseperis honourable,  
Which they beren in signe of victory;  
It is witnesse of here dedes mightily.

Eke there be knightes old of the garter,  
That in here time dide right worthily;  
And the honour they dide to the laurer,  
Is, for by it they have here laud wholly,  
Here triumph eke, and marshial glory;  
Which unto hem is more parfit richesse,  
Than any wight imagine can or gesse.

for oon lefe given of that noble tree,  
To any wight that hath don worthily,  
And it be don so as it oghte to be,  
Is more honour than any thing erthly;  
Witnessse of Rome that founder was trewly  
Of al knighthood and dedes mervelous;  
Record I take of Titus Livius.



And as for hir that crouned is in grene,  
It is flora, of thise floures goddesse;  
And al that here on hir awaiting bene,  
It are swich folk that loved ydelnesse  
And not delite hadde of no besynesse  
But for to hunt and hauke, and pley in medes,  
And many othere suche ydel dedes;

And for the grete delite and plesaunce  
They have to the floure, so reverently  
They unto it do swich grete obeisaunce  
As ye may se. Now faire Madame, quod I,  
If I dorst aske what is the cause and why,  
That knightes have the signë of honour,  
Wel rather by the Lefe than by the flour?

Soothly, doughter, quod she, this is the trouth:  
for knightes ever sholde be persevering,  
To seke honour without feintise or slouth,  
fro wele to better in al maner thing;  
In signe of which, with leves aye lasting  
They be rewarded aftir here degre,  
Whose lustie grene may not appaired be,



But aie keping here beautie freshe and grene;  
for there nis storme that ne may hem deface,  
Ne haile nor snow, ne winde nor frostes kene;  
Wherfore they have this propertie and grace.  
And for the floure, within a litel space  
Woll be ylost; so simple of nature  
They be, that they no grevaunce may endure;

And everich storme wil blow hem sone awaye,  
Ne lasten they not but for oon sesoun;  
That is the cause, the very trouth to saye,  
That they maye not, by no way of resoun,  
Be put to no swich occupacioun.

✿ Madame, quod I, with al mine whole servise  
I thanke you now, in my most humble wise;

for now I am acertaind throughly,  
Of everich thing I desired to knowe.

✿ I am right glad that I have said, sothly,  
Oght to your plesure, if ye wille me trowe,  
Quod she ayen, But to whom do ye owe  
Your service? and which wolle ye honoure,  
Tel me I pray, this yere, the Lefe or floure?



Madame, quod I, thogh I be least worthy,  
Unto the Lefe I owe myn observaunce:

That is, quod she, right wel don certeinly;  
And pray I God to honour yow avaunce,  
And kepe yow fro the wikked remembraunce  
Of Malebouche, and al his cruelte,  
And al that good and wel condiciouned be:

for here may I no lenger now abide,  
I moste folowe the grete company,  
That ye may see yondir bifore yow ride.

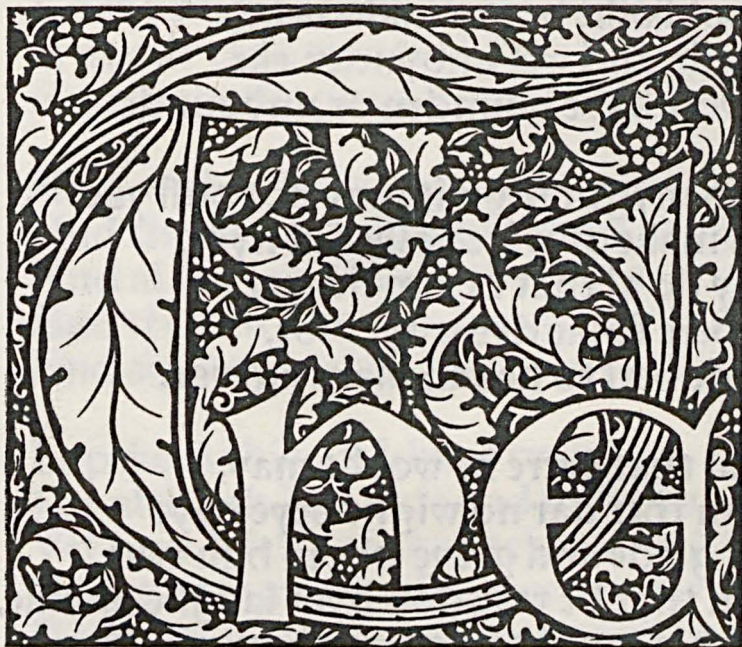
And tho forth, as I couthe, most humbly  
I toke my leve of hir, as she gan hie  
Aftir hem, as faste as ever she mighte;  
And I drow homward, for it was nigh nighte,

And put al that I hadde sene in writing,  
Undir support of hem that lust it rede.  
O litel boke, thou art so unconning,  
How darst thou put thyself in prees, for drede?  
It is wonder that thou wexest not rede!  
Sith that thou wast ful lite who shal biholde  
Thy rude langage, ful boistously unfolde.





The Boke of Cupide, God of Love,  
or the Cuckow and the Nightingale.



GOD of Love, ah! benedicite,  
How myghty and how grete a lorde is he!  
for he can make of lowe hertes hye,  
And highe hertes low, and like for to dye,  
And harde hertis he can make free.



And he can make, within a lytel stounde,  
Of seke folke, ful fresh, hool and sounde,  
And of hool folke he can make seke;  
He can bynde, and wel unbynden eke,  
What he wole have bounden or unbounde.

To telle his myght my wit may not suffyse,  
for he can make of wise folke ful nyse,  
for he may do al that he can devyse,  
And in lithere folke dystroye vise,  
And proude hertys he can make agryse.

Shortely, al that evere he wol he may,  
Hyenst him ther dar no wight seye nay;  
for he can glade and greve whom him lyke,  
And whom that he wol, don hym laughe or sike,  
And most his myght he sheweth ever in May.

for every trewe gentil herte and fre,  
That with him is, or thinketh for to be,  
Hyens May now shal have some sterynge,  
Other to joy, or elles to some morenyng,  
In no sesoun so grette, as thynketh me.



for then they mowe here the briddes singe,  
And see the floures and the leues springe,  
That bringeth into hertes remembraunce  
A maner ease, ymedled with grevaunce,  
And lusty thoghtes ful of grete longynge.

And of that longynge cometh hevynesse,  
And thereof groweth oft tyme grete seknesse,  
And al for lak of that that they desyre:  
And thus in May ben hertys set on fire,  
And so they brenne forthe in grete distresse.

I speke al this of felyng truly;  
for althogh I be olde and unlusty,  
Yet have I felte of that sekenes in May  
Bothe hote and colde, an acces every day,  
How sore ywis, ther wot no wight but I.

I am so shaken with the feveres white,  
Of al this May yet slept I but a lyte;  
And also hit ne liketh noght to me  
That eny herte shulde slepy be,  
In whom that Love his firy dart wol smyte.

But as I lay this other nyght wakyng,  
I thocht how lovers had a tokenyng,  
And among hem hit was a comune tale,  
That hit wer good to here the nyghtyngale,  
Rather then the leude cuckow synge.

And then I thocht anoon, as hit was daye,  
I wolde goo somme whedir for to assaye  
Yf that I myght a nyghtyngale here;  
for yet I non had herd of al this yere,  
And hit was tho the thridde nyght of May.

And right anoon as I the day espiede,  
No lenger wolde I in my bed abyde;  
But unto a wode that was faste by,  
I wente forthe allone ful prively,  
And helde my way down by a broke syde,

Til I come into a launde of white and grene,  
So feire oon had I nevere in bene;  
The grounde was grene, ypoudred with daysé,  
The floures and the gras ylike al hie,  
Al grene and white, was no thing elles sene.



There sat I doune amonge the feire floures,  
And saw the briddes crepe out of her boures,  
Ther as they had rested hem al the nyght;  
They were so joyful of the dayes lyght,  
That they beganne of Mayes ben ther houres.

They coude that servise alle by rote;  
Ther was also mony a lovely note!  
Somme songe loude as they hadde pleynd,  
And somme in other maner voys yfeyned,  
And somme al oute with a lowde throte.

They pruned hem, and made hem ryght gay,  
And daunseden and lepten on the spray;  
And evermore two and two in fere,  
Ryght so as they hadde chosen hem to yere  
In feverere upon Seynt Valentynes day.

And the ryver that then I sat upon,  
Hit made suche a noyse as hit ther ron,  
Acordaunt to the foules ermonye,  
Methoght hit was the beste melodye  
That myghte be herd of eny lyvyng man.

And for delyte, I ne wote never how,  
I fel in suche a slombre and a swowe,  
Nat al on slepe, ne fully al wakyng,  
And in that swowe me thoght I herde singe  
That sory bridde the lewede Cukkowe,

And that was on a tre right faste bye.  
And who was then evel apayed but I?  
Now God, quod I, that died upon the croise,  
Yive sorowe on thee, and on thy foule voys!  
for lytel joy have I now of thy crie.

And as I with the Cukkow gan to chide,  
I herde, in the nexte bussches beside,  
A Nyghtyngale so lustely to singe,  
That with her clere voys she made rynge  
Thro out alle the grene wode wide.

A! goode Nyghtyngale, quod I thenne,  
A lytelle hast thou be to longe henne,  
for her hath be the lewede Cukkow,  
And songen songes rather then hast thou:  
I prey to God that evel fire him brenne!



And now I wil yow tel a wonder thyng:  
As longe as I lay in that swownyng,  
Me thoght I wist al that the briddes mente,  
And what they seyde, and what was her entente,  
And of her speche I hadde good knowyng.

And then herd I the Nyghtyngale seye:  
How, goode Cukkow, go sommewhere thy weye  
And let us that can synge dwellen here;  
for every wight escheweth thee to here,  
Thy songes be so elyng, in gode feye.

What, quoth she, what may thee ayle now?  
Hit thinketh me, I synge as wel as thou,  
for my songe is bothe trewe and pleyne,  
Althogh I cannot creke hit so in veyne,  
As thou dost in thy throte, I wote ner how.

And every wight may understonde me,  
But, Nyghtyngale, so may they not don thee,  
for thou hast mony a feyned quëint cry;  
And I have herd thee seye, Ocy, ocy;  
But who myghte wete what that shulde be?

¶ O fole, quoth she, wostow not what that is?  
Whan that I sey, Ocy, ocy, ywisse,  
Then mene I that I wolde wonder fayne,  
That al tho were shamefully yslayne,  
That menen oght ayenes love amys.

And also I wolde alle tho were dede,  
That thenke not her lyve in love to lede,  
for who that wol the God of Love not serve,  
I dar wel sey he is worthy for to sterve;  
And for that skille, Ocy, ocy, I grede.

¶ Ey! quoth the Cukkow, ywis this is queynt lawe,  
That eyther shal I love or elles be slawe  
But I forsake alle suche companye;  
for myn entent is neyther for to dye,  
Ne while I lyve in Loves yoke to drawe.

for lovers be the folke that ben on lyve,  
That moste disese han, and most unthrive,  
And most enduren sorowe, wo, and care,  
And at the lest failen of her welfare:  
What nedith hit ayenes treweth to strive?



What? quoth she tho; thou art out of thy mynde!  
How maist thou in thy cherles herte fynde  
To speke of Loves servauntes in this wyse?  
for in this worlde is noon so good servyse  
To every wyght that gentil is of kynde;

for therof truly cometh al goodnesse,  
Al honour and al gentilnesse,  
Worshippe, and ese, and alle hertys lust,  
Perfyt joy, and ful ensured trust,  
Jolité, plesaunce, and eek freshenesse,

Lowelyhed, and trewe companye,  
Semelyhed, largenesse, and curtesye,  
Drede of shame, and for to don amys:  
for he that truly Loves servaunt ys,  
Were lother be yshamed then to dye.

And that is sothe al that ever I sey,  
In that beleve I wil bothe lyve and deye,  
And, Cukkow, so rede I thee that thou do ywis.  
Ye then, quoth she, God let me never have blis,  
If evere I unto that counseyl obeye!

Nyghtyngale, thou spekest wonder feyre,  
But, for al that, the sothe is the contreyre;  
for loving in yonge folke is but rage,  
And in olde folk hit is a grete dotage,  
Who most hit useth, most he shal apeyre.

for therof cometh mony an hevinesse,  
Sorow and care, and mony a grete seknesse,  
Dispite, debate, angre, and envye,  
Repreve and shame, untrust, and jelosye,  
Pride, and myschefe, povert, and wodenesse.

What! Lovyng is an office of dispaire,  
And oon thing is therin that is not faire;  
for who that geteth of love a lytil blysse,  
But if he be alway therby ywysse,  
He may ful sone of age have his haire.

And, therfor, Nyghtyngale, holde thee nye;  
for, leve me wel, for al thy loude crye,  
If thou fer or longe be fro thy make,  
Thou shalt be as other that be forsake,  
Then shalt thou haten love as wele as I.



Of ye, quoth she, on thy name and on thee!  
The God of Love ne let thee nevere ythe!  
for thou art wors a thousand folde then wode,  
for mony is ful worthie and ful gode,  
That hadde be noght, ne hadde love ybe.

for Love his servant evermore amendeth,  
And fro al evele tachches him defendeth,  
And maketh him to brenne as eny fire,  
In trouthe and in worschippful desire,  
And, whom him liketh, joy ynogh him sendeth.

Ye, Nyghtyngale, he seyde, holde thee now stille!  
for Love hath no resoun but his wille;  
for ofte si the untrewe folke he esith,  
And trewe folk so bittirly displeseth,  
That for defaute of grace he let hem spille.

With suche a lorde wolde I never be,  
for he is blynde alwey and may not se,  
And whan he lyeth he not, ne whan he fayleth.  
And in his court ful selde trouthe avayleth,  
So dyverse and so wilful eke is he.

¶ Than toke I of the Nyghtyngale kepe;  
She kest a sighe out of her herte depe,  
And seyde: Alas, that I ever was bore!  
I can for tene seye not oon worde more;  
¶ And ryght with that she brast on for to wepe.

¶ Alas! quoth she, my herte wol tobreke  
To here thus this false bridde speke  
Of Love, and of his worshipful servyse.  
Now God of Love, thou helpe me in summe wyse,  
That I may on this Cukkow ben awreke.

¶ Methoughte than, that I stert up anone,  
And to the broke I ran and gatte a stone,  
And at the Cukkow hertely I caste;  
And he for drede gan flye away ful faste,  
And glad was I, whan that he was ygon.

And evermore the Cukkow, as he fley,  
He seyde: farewell, farewell papyngay!  
As thogh he had yscorned, as thogh me;  
But ay I hunted him fro tre to tre,  
Tille he was fer al out of syght away.



And then come the Nyghtyngale to me,  
And seyde: frende, forsoth I thanke thee,  
That thou hast lyked me thus to rescowe;  
And oon avowe to love I wol allowe,  
That al this May I wol thy singer be.

☞ I thanked her, and was ryght wel apayed:  
☞ Yee, quoth she, and be thou not amayed,  
Thogh thou have herde the Cukkow er then me;  
for, if I lyve, hit shal amended be  
The nexte May, yf I be not affrayed.

And oon thing I wol rede thee also,  
Ne leve thou not the Cukkow, loves fo,  
for al that he hath seyde is strong lesinge.  
☞ Nay, nay, quoth I, ther shal no thing me bringe  
fro love, and yet he doth me mekil wo.

☞ Yee? Use thou, quoth she, this medecyne,  
Everich day this May er that thou dyne:  
Goo loke upon the fresshe flour the dayesye,  
And, thogh thou be for wo in poynt to dye,  
That shal ful gretly lyssen thee of thy pyne.

And loke alwey that thou be gode and trewe,  
And I wol synge oon of my songes newe  
for love of thee, as loude as I may crye.  
And thenne she began this songe ful hye:  
I shrewe hem al that be to love untrewe.

And whan she hadde songen hit out to thende,  
Now farewel, quoth she, for I moste wende,  
And, God of Love, that can ryght wel and may,  
As mekil joye sende yow this day,  
As ever yet he eny lover sende!

Thus toke the Nyghtyngale hir leve of me.  
I pray to God he alway with hir be,  
And joy of love he sende hir evermore,  
And shilde us fro the Cukkow and his lore,  
for ther is non so fals a bridde as he.

forthe she fley, the gentil Nyghtyngale,  
To alle the briddes that werene in the dale,  
And gat hem alle into a place in fere,  
And hem besoughten that they wolden here  
Hir dysese, and thus began hir tale.



Ye knowe wel, hit is not fro yow hidde,  
Now that the Cukkow and I fast have chidde  
Ever siþe that hit was dayes lyght;  
I prey yow alle that ye do me ryght  
Of that foule, fals, unkynde bridde.

Then spake oon brid for al, by oon assent:  
This mater asketh good avysement;  
for we be fewe briddes her in fere,  
And soth hit is, the Cukkow is not here,  
And therfore we wol have a parlement.

And therat shal the egle be our lorde,  
And other perys that ben of recorde,  
And the Cukkow shal be after ysent;  
And ther shal be yeven the jugement,  
Or elles we shul make summe acorde.

And this shal be, withouten any nay,  
The morowe, Seynt Valentynes day,  
Undir the maple that is feire and grene,  
Before the chambre window of the Quene,  
At Modestok upon the grene lay.

She thanked hem, and than hir leue she toke,  
And fleye into an hawthorne by the broke,  
And ther she sate and songe upon the tre,  
Terme of my lyve love hath withholde me,  
So loude that I with that song awoke.

**Explicit Clanvowe.**



Note, It has been pointed out by the Rev. Professor Skeat, in "The Academy," May 2, 1896, p. 365, that the words "Explicit Clanvowe" which occur in the MS., ff. 1, 6 (Camb. Univ. Lib.), clearly refer to the author of the poem, Sir Thomas Clanvowe. He has further shown that the date is about 1405-10, and that "the queen" is Joan of Navarre, who held Woodstock manor.

Edited by f. S. Ellis, and printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the County of Middlesex, and finished on the 21st day of August, 1896.



Sold by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press.

















